

EDITORIAL

Pay the price -- bear the pain

In our present-day world two disasters threaten. One is nuclear war; the other, collapse of our economic system upon which the security of every single one of the six billion people on this earth depends. Neither threat will be easily averted.

Of the two, economic collapse poses the greater danger because we Americans refuse to look squarely at the inevitable day of reckoning.

Too many Americans have lost sight of the goals and purposes of government. In large part, government (which is all of us) has contributed to the problem by subsidizing special interests. To name but a few, subsidies support farm prices, provide housing for the indigent, rescue operations from bankruptcy, pay many medical expenses, and promote the arts. And, while all these programs are commendable, America is reaching the point where the piper must be paid.

America is over-extended. America is deeply in debt. That is what "deficit spending" means. If we continue on this course, our economic system will collapse when the bills come due, and that of every other country will collapse along with ours. Unless we get a handle on our financial mess of pottage, financial chaos will result.

The price to be paid is enormous and the pain to be endured, excruciating. The alternative is far worse, however. Down the road lies world-wide starvation and awaits global anarchy where only the strongest and most ruthless will survive.

A newscast on television shows a family at a Salvation Army "soup kitchen," with the well-fed-looking father saying between mouthfuls, "What has this administration done for me?" When Americans look to government to supply all their needs, Americans grind their birthright under their own heels.

It is not the purpose of our government to provide a living for its people; the function of our government is to dispense justice, provide an atmosphere in which opportunity can flourish, set guidelines under which society can live in peace, and protect its people from foreign or domestic aggression. In this atmosphere, people must assume responsibility for providing for themselves.

A segment of American society has fallen victim to the "gimme" syndrome; some demand instant gratification of all their desires. Who among us asks, "What can I do to help my

country?" Why are so many saying, "Why isn't my country doing more for me?"

In the recent give-away program of surplus cheese, for instance, about ten percent of those who lined up for a share of free cheese were neither entitled to receive it nor in need. In the lines were people wearing expensive clothing and driving their big late-model cars to distribution centers. Some were turned away empty-handed because they couldn't meet residence requirements. Why are programs to help the poor taken advantage of by those not in need?

On all sides we hear of corruption and erosion of ethics. Politicians and businessmen are accused of importing, distributing, or dealing in illicit drugs. Tax evasion to the tune of billions of dollars is occurring. Justices are accused of taking bribes. We hear of padded expense accounts...Loopholes...Graft...Irresponsible hazardous waste disposal that endangers lives of the innocent and unsuspecting...Poison in medicines on drugstore shelves...Poisons in water supplies...Vandalism...Crime so rampant decent citizens (and there are still millions of those!) are afraid to venture onto city streets even in daylight or to walk along country lanes at night...Court dockets and jails over-loaded with cases and inmates.

Although the picture is bleak, even gloomy, signs remain that we are not irretrievably doomed. Some of the millions of unemployed have found other jobs, albeit at lower wages than they drew in the past. Some economists and business leaders are participating in efforts to stem the tide of economic disaster. Many Americans are not yet "on the take." Many operate honest businesses and provide reliable products to consumers; many deliver an honest day's work for a day's pay; many give time, money and support to worthy causes. There are among us compassionate doctors, honest lawyers, incorruptible police and judges, and many many ordinary people who voluntarily comply with the laws of the land. The vast majority of our citizenry is a body of good, wholesome, respectable, hard-working and law-abiding people.

For them, and for the millions upon millions of others like them who live in other nations around the world, we must pay the price and bear the pain of putting our nation's economy on a stable footing. We must sacrifice with them, now, to ensure the survival of this majority. Civilization, as we know it, is in clear jeopardy if we fail.